



# **FACT SHEET**

## **U.S. Air Force Reserve**

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### **Band of the U.S. Air Force Reserve History**

The Band of the United States Air Force Reserve is the oldest band, active or reserve, assigned to the Air Force, having continued from its formation in 1941 to the present without a break in service. The band was formed on October 1, 1941 at Mitchell Field, New York, as the First Air Force Band. During the first decade of its existence, the band was redesignated four times, first as the 81st Army Air Forces Band (August 1942), then as the 581st Army Band (December 1943), then as the 581st Air Force Band when the Air Force became a separate service in 1947. While at Mitchell Field the band was assigned to First Air Force (October 1941-March 1946); Headquarters, Continental Air Command. The 581st Air Force Band moved to Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, in April 1961 along with other units assigned directly to Headquarters, Continental Air Command. When Headquarters Air Force Reserve replaced the Continental Air Command on August 1, 1968, the band assumed its present title as the Band of the United States Air Force Reserve. In 1997 the United States Air Force Reserve was made a major command in the Air Force.

The Band of the United States Air Force Reserve has always been one of the most productive bands in the Air Force. During the first decade and a half of its existence, it drew much of its membership from the rolls of the New York musicians' union. During these early years the band was active throughout the northeastern United States, performing in all the major cities at sites such as Radio City Music Hall and the Rockefeller Center. The band was also active in the broadcast media, having its own radio program during the 1940's called "Mitchell Field Men of the Air" which was heard on WOR and the Mutual Broadcast System. Recordings by the band were used as background music for "Voice of America" broadcasts in Europe, the Middle East, the Far East and Latin America.

Media activities continued to be a mainstay of the band's reputation during the early 1950's. The band was involved in the infancy of television broadcasting, having two live weekly programs on the Dumont Network. One of these programs, "Talent Patrol", was hosted alternately by Arlene Francis and a talented young musician/comedian named Steve Allen. The other program, "Guide Right", was a musical show featuring some of the popular stars of Broadway and New York at the time. The band also performed at the premier screening of "The Glen Miller Story" starring James Stewart and June Allyson.

By the middle of the 1960's the band had appeared throughout the continental United States and at several overseas locations with such outstanding performers as Paul Whiteman, Benny Goodman, Morton Gould, W.C. Handy and Danny Kaye. They had entertained numerous world political and military leaders including Presidents Eisenhower and Johnson, General Douglas MacArthur, Queen Elizabeth II of England, Prime Minister Nehru of India, Premier Ben Gurion of Israel and the Shah of Iran.

Since moving to Robins Air Force Base, the Band of the United States Air Force Reserve has continued to entertain heads of state, other political and military leaders, and countless American and foreign citizens, including the crews of the "Nautilus" atomic submarine and the Apollo 8,9 and 10 moon flights. Among their key appearances at international events have been Hemisfair '68, the inaugural parade for the U.S. Virgin Islands first elected governor in 1971, the Detroit International Air Show, the change of command and retreat ceremonies in conjunction with the 1979 signing of the Panama Canal treaties, the 1982 World's Fair, the first foreign military unit

to march through Red Square, Moscow, Russia in 1992, the only foreign military unit to perform in the 50th Celebration of VE Day Parade in St Petersburg, Russia in 1995 and most recently the band was the lead off unit in the internationally televised Rose Bowl Parade for the 50th Anniversary of the Air Force. The band marched in or participated in such regional events as the Indian and Texas Sesquicentennial celebrations, the Aquacentennial Parade in Minneapolis, Minnesota; the Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the Brevard, Mobile, Clearwater, Hollywood and Jacksonville Jazz Festivals and the Mardi Gras Festivities in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The band's appearances at the Indianapolis 500, Daytona 500, Napa 500, Orange Bowl and many professional football and baseball games have been broadcast on cable and network television. Other television appearances by elements of the band include those programs such as "To Tell the Truth", "What's My Line?" "Good Morning America", "The Today Show", "Captain Kangaroo", "Prime Time Country" and "Nashville Now". During their live and televised performances over the past three decades, the band has appeared with such personalities as Bob Hope, Raymond Burr, Dinah Shore, Mary Ann Mobley and Maureen O'Hara Blair, Gary Morris, B.J. Thomas, the Lettermen, Mila Mason, Lari White, Crystal Gayle, and Faith Hill.

The Band of the United States Air Force Reserve today consists of 60 professional musicians assigned to several subunits. The nucleus of this versatile organization is the highly acclaimed Concert Band which performs musical fare ranging from original band compositions and orchestral transcriptions to patriotic selections and marches, popular Broadway and show tunes. Smaller specialized performing groups formed from the concert band personnel include the Air Force Reserve Jazz Ensemble, Dixie Express, the Air Force Reserve Pipe Band, the Ceremonial Band, Brass and Woodwind Quintets, Tuba Euphonium Ensemble, High Flight, the Reserve Singers and solo performers. "Reserve Generation," a nine-member popular music combo, functions independently of the Concert Band, and is a leader throughout the entire Air Force band career field in making aware the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse around the country, through their "Just Say No" counter-drug production. They have been sharing their drug-free message since 1990, earning them national recognition and the 1995 Department of Defense Anti-Drug Awareness Award. This group was also awarded the Air Force Public Affairs Major Hap Arnold Award for their support of the democratization of Azerbaijan in 1996.

The Band of the United States Air Force Reserve performs extensively throughout the band's primary geographical area of Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi as well as other areas in the southeastern United States and the Caribbean, in support of the Air Force and the Air Force Reserve recruiting, military, and community relation activities. The band supplements its live audience with media appearances and recordings. In recognition of its outstanding mission accomplishments, showmanship and versatility, the Band of the United States Air Force Reserve is the recipient of five Air Force Outstanding Unit Award citations, two Colonel George S. Howard Awards and many civilian awards.